

August 2, 2013

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow  
Chairwoman  
Senate Agriculture Committee  
Washington D.C. 20510

The Honorable Frank Lucas  
Chairman  
House Agriculture Committee  
Washington D.C. 20515

The Honorable Thad Cochran  
Ranking Member  
Senate Agriculture Committee  
Washington D.C. 20510

The Honorable Collin Peterson  
Ranking Member  
House Agriculture Committee  
Washington D.C. 20515

Dear Agriculture Committee Leaders:

The undersigned farm, consumer and rural organizations are writing to raise our strong objections to efforts to undermine the authority of the Secretary of Agriculture to enforce the Packers and Stockyards Act.

Section 11102 of the House version of the 2013 Farm Bill would greatly limit the authority of the Secretary to address deceptive, fraudulent, retaliatory, and anti-competitive practices by meatpackers and poultry companies in their dealings with livestock and poultry farmers and ranchers.

During the 2008 Farm Bill process, Congress heard extensively from livestock and poultry producers, farmer organizations, and consumer groups about anti-competitive and unfair business practices that unfortunately have become commonplace in the livestock and poultry sectors of our agricultural economy.

As a result, the final 2008 Farm Bill included provisions to require USDA to write regulations to address the most egregious of these practices and to define certain terms in the statute. Section 11102 of the House version of the 2013 Farm Bill would repeal the 2008 Farm Bill provision that addressed these concerns and place a broad limitation on USDA's authority to enforce many aspects of the Packers and Stockyards Act of 1921.

The impetus for Section 11102 is that the livestock and poultry companies whose practices were examined by the 2008 Farm Bill provisions and/or USDA's implementing regulations don't appreciate that scrutiny. Such practices include forcing poultry growers to make expensive upgrades to their chicken houses, at the same time as the companies controlling their contracts are secretly planning to shut down plants and cancel their contracts, leaving the farmers with massive stranded investments and facing bankruptcy, and leaving the taxpayers to pick up the tab.

These practices also include retaliating against farmers and ranchers for exercising their legal rights to communicate with their Members of Congress or USDA officials about the realities of certain livestock procurement practices as well as what is

happening in their contract relationships with these companies. Section 11102 insulates, and prohibits USDA from addressing, these and other egregious practices in the livestock and poultry sectors.

Please reject Section 11102 of the House bill during the 2013 Farm Bill Conference and allow farmers and ranchers to prosper in a business environment based on mutual cooperation and fair business standards, not fear, coercion and retaliation.

Sincerely,

Alabama Contract Poultry Growers Association  
Buckeye Quality Beef Association  
California Farmers Union  
Campaign for Contract Agriculture Reform  
Cattle Producers of Louisiana  
Cattle Producers of Washington  
Center for Food Safety  
Center for Rural Affairs  
Colorado Independent CattleGrowers Association  
Contract Poultry Growers of the Virginias  
Dakota Resource Council  
Dakota Rural Action  
Equal Exchange  
Farm and Ranch Freedom Alliance  
Farm Aid  
Food & Water Watch  
Georgia Organics  
Hmong National Development, Inc.  
Idaho Organization of Resource Councils  
Independent Beef Association of North Dakota (I-BAND)  
Independent Cattlemen of Nebraska  
Independent Cattlemen of Wyoming  
Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy  
Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement  
Kansas Cattlemen's Association  
Kansas Rural Center  
Land Loss Prevention Project  
Land Stewardship Project  
Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association  
Michigan Farmers Union  
Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Service  
Missouri's Best Beef Co-Operative  
Missouri Farmers Union  
Missouri Rural Crisis Center  
Montana Farmers Union  
Murray County, Oklahoma Independent Cattlemen's Association

Mvskoke Food Sovereignty Initiative  
National Catholic Rural Life Conference  
National Cooperative Grocers Association  
National Family Farm Coalition  
National Farmers Union  
National Organic Coalition  
National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition  
National Young Farmers Coalition  
Nevada Live Stock Association  
New England Farmers Union  
North Dakota Farmers Union  
Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance  
Northeast Organic Farmers Association (NOFA)- Interstate Council  
Northeast Organic Farmers Association (NOFA)- Massachusetts  
Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Working Group  
Northern Plains Resource Council  
Northern Wisconsin Beef Producers  
Organization for Competitive Markets (OCM)  
Poultry Partners (Arkansas)  
Powder River Basin Resource Council  
Rocky Mountain Farmers Union  
Rural Advancement Foundation International  
Rural Coalition/Coalición Rural  
R-CALF-USA  
Slow Food California  
Slow Food USA  
South Dakota Stockgrowers Association  
South Dakota Farmers Union  
Southern Sustainable Agriculture Working Group  
Weiser River Resource Council  
Western Colorado Congress  
Western Organization of Resource Councils  
Western Sustainable Agriculture Working Group